UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.183/SR.217
5 December 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 217th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 15 November 1995, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING AND EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE HELD AT THE VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, AUSTRIA, FROM 29 AUGUST TO 1 SEPTEMBER 1995

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES HELD AT CARTAGENA DE INDIAS, COLOMBIA, FROM 14 TO 20 OCTOBER 1995

DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Office of Conference and Support Services, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

95-82302 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING AND EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, HELD AT THE VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, AUSTRIA, FROM 29 AUGUST TO 1 SEPTEMBER 1995

2. The CHAIRMAN reported that he had headed the delegation representing the Committee at the United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine and had addressed the meeting in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee.

3. The invited experts had made presentations in five panels, addressing the topics of the question of Palestine on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations; the current political environment; various aspects of the final status of negotiations; the current socio-economic situation; and the need for strengthening activities by NGOs. The ensuing discussions had been lively and frank and had shown a clear commitment on the part of all participants to work towards a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

4. In the final communiqué, the NGO participants had welcomed the positive developments in the Middle East peace process since the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles. They had also noted with great concern the repeated delays in the implementation of the letter and spirit of the agreement, which jeopardized the achievement of a just and lasting peace, and had exhorted Israel to honour its commitments in a timely manner. They had also reaffirmed that Israel, as the occupying Power, remained obligated to observe the fourth Geneva Convention until the Palestinian people had achieved full sovereignty. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people had been emphasized, as had the need to demonstrate solidarity and to reaffirm the fundamental importance of questions related to Jerusalem, settlements and the right of return for the attainment of a just and lasting peace. The communiqué had called for concerted efforts by NGOs to publicize violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular ongoing incarceration of political prisoners; closure and intimidation of Palestinian institutions; restrictions imposed on international and Palestinian NGOs and the repeated closure of Jerusalem. Israel had also been urged to assure safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank for goods and people. It had further called for strengthening of NGOs and greater involvement and cooperation at all levels.

5. The Committee delegation had had a candid and constructive exchange of views with the chairmen and other members of the International and the European Coordinating Committees on the objectives and modalities of future cooperation. The Bureau would continue consultations with NGO representatives.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES HELD AT CARTAGENA DE INDIAS, COLOMBIA, FROM 14 TO 20 OCTOBER 1995

6. The CHAIRMAN reported that he had represented the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries and at the preceding ministerial meeting. The Committee had always had observer status at summits of the Non-Aligned Countries, reflecting the Movement's staunch support of the Palestinian cause. A special committee on Palestine existed within the Non-Aligned Movement to analyse the ongoing situation in the occupied territories.

7. In the final Cartagena document, a score of paragraphs had been devoted to Palestine and to the peace process, following in-depth analysis by Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of State and Government. They had welcomed the creation of the Palestinian Authority, considering that it would serve as foundation for a Palestinian State, and appealed for rapid extension of the competence of the autonomous Palestinian Government and for the prompt application of the Declaration of Principles. They had fully supported the conclusions of the Taba Agreement, considering it to constitute an important step towards total withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967.

8. They had further emphasized that United Nations responsibility should continue until the Palestinian people enjoyed full exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, a sovereign and independent State within its recognized borders had been created and the refugee problem solved. The General Assembly had been urged to restate during its fiftieth session the United Nations position on such important issues as the establishment of a final peace, including the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and refugees. They had reiterated their support of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on Jerusalem.

9. The Committee was gratified by the importance attributed by the Heads of State and Government to its work, as the United Nations mechanism, in connection with the Palestinian question. The final document had emphasized that substantial financial assistance would be needed to apply the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement. Support had been expressed for the peace process initiated in Madrid in October 1991. The efforts of other parties in the Middle Eastern conflict had been commended, particularly regarding the Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanon, and note had been taken of the Washington Declaration of 25 July 1994. Finally, all illegal decisions taken by Israel regarding the occupied Arab territories had been declared null and void.

10. The Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement continued staunchly to support the Palestinian people in its quest for an independent and sovereign State within recognized borders. They welcomed the considerable progress achieved in the current peace process but considered that the United Nations should continue to exercise its responsibilities in that connection.

DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (A/AC.183/1995/CRP.2 and Add.1)

11. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the 1995 report, and in particular chapter IV, had been prepared in the context of the significant new developments that had taken place since the previous report. Chapter I contained the introduction and indicated in brief the Committee's objectives and perspectives during the year. Chapters II and III were procedural and summarized the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information, and gave information on the organization of the work of the Committee. Chapter IV reviewed the situation related to the question of Palestine and efforts to implement the Committee's mandate.

12. The Committee had noted that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations had advanced, despite obstacles, leading to signature of the Protocol on Further Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, followed by the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

13. Chapter V, section A, described the action taken by the Committee in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/62 A, while section B contained an account of action taken by the Committee and by the Division for Palestinian Rights, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/62 A and B. Chapter VI covered the work of the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/62 C. The various chapters would be updated by the Secretariat in consultation with the Rapporteur, as necessary, in order to reflect the most recent major developments. The seventh and last chapter contained the Committee's draft recommendations and expressed its intention to continue to strive for maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its programme in the light of developments, in order further to contribute to the realization of the United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

14. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee might begin by hearing comments of a general nature, before considering the report chapter by chapter and section by section. If there were no comments, he would take it that the Committee agreed to the procedure which he had suggested.

15. It was so decided.

16. Mr. ELISSEEV (Ukraine) said that, in order to present a complete picture of the Committee's activities, it would be advisable to include in the draft report the results of the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 14 to 20 October 1995 and the decisions regarding the Palestinian people that had been adopted at that Conference. He also proposed to insert, at the end of the report, a chronology of important dates in the history of the Palestinian people, including recent events such as the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

17. The CHAIRMAN endorsed the suggestion that a chronology of important events in the history of the Palestinian people be included in the draft report and noted that a reference to the Conference at Cartagena de Indias would be inserted in paragraph 40 of the draft report which dealt with attendance at international conferences and meetings.

18. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, said that a reference to the Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 14 to 20 October 1995 would be incorporated in paragraph 40 of the draft report, and that a reference to the final document adopted by the Conference would appear in subparagraph (g) of paragraph 41. He suggested that the chronology of the significant events in the recent history of the Palestinian people should be integrated into the draft report as an annex.

19. He proposed two revisions to the draft report. The first would be inserted as the last sentence at the end of paragraph 25 and would read: "The Committee welcomed the convening of the Second Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit held in Amman, Jordan, from 29 to 31 October 1995, which will facilitate the expansion of investment in the region and enhance regional cooperation and development, thereby promoting stability and an atmosphere conducive to peace." The second revision would be inserted at the end of paragraph 4 as a new paragraph and would read: "On 6 November 1995, the Bureau of the Committee condemned the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and expressed its hope that this criminal act would not have an adverse effect on the Middle East peace process to which Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have committed themselves."

20. Mr. ZAINNUDDIN (Malaysia) sought clarification with regard to the expansion of the membership of the Committee referred to in paragraph 5 of chapter VII of the draft report, containing the recommendations of the Committee, and asked which specific countries, if any, had expressed interest in becoming members.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that for the past two years, the Committee had encouraged all States who wished to participate in the activities of the Committee to come forward. Since 1993, there had been a growing interest on the part of several countries, if not in becoming official members of the Committee, then in following its work much more closely. However, despite a general expression of interest in the Committee's work on the part of both European and non-European countries, there had been no official requests from specific States to become members.

22. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) thanked all the members of the Committee for their continuous support of the Palestine people and said that there was a greater need than ever to expand the membership of the Committee. With regard to the point of clarification raised by the representative of Malaysia, he said that there had been informal discussions with some delegations about their joining the Committee. With regard to the recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter VII of the draft report, he stressed the importance of the last sentence in paragraph 8 of chapter VII, in which the Committee requested the Secretary-General to maintain the political structure and composition of the Division for Palestinian Rights and to continue to provide it with the necessary resources in order to carry out its tasks.

23. Finally, he expressed appreciation to the staff of the Department of Public Information for their efforts to carry out General Assembly mandated activities, as well as other initiatives, such as a training programme for young Palestinian journalists in New York City. However, it was equally important to implement other measures that had been approved by the General Assembly, such as the envisaged news mission. He suggested that it would be extremely useful to have that news mission take part in the media coverage of the Palestine national elections, scheduled to be held on 20 January 1996.

24. The draft report, as revised, and the addendum to the draft report contained in document A/AC.183/1995/CRP.2/Add.2 were adopted chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph and as a whole.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would meet at a later date to consider the draft resolutions on the question of Palestine to be submitted to the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.